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SUBJECT Interview with Vladimir ^{SAGAROV}~~Sagarov~~

DAVID HARTMAN: Vladimir Sagarov is only 35 years old, right now. Already he has lived enough for maybe three or four people, maybe three lives. First, he was the privileged son of a high-ranking Soviet diplomat and KGB agent. Second, he grew up to become a trained Soviet diplomat and KGB agent himself. And then, he says, he became a double agent for the CIA during his first foreign assignment. And after four years in the Middle East and Near East as a double agent, he defected to the United States. The CIA gave him a new name, a new identity. And for the last eight years, he has lived here in the United States. He is now an American citizen. He is a marketing consultant, occasionally writes about his old specialty, which is foreign affairs, under the name of Vladimir Sagarov. That is his real, or was his real Russian name. And as a matter of fact, he's got an article coming up in Penthouse magazine. He also has a book about his life just being published, and it's called "High Treason." And he is with us in silhouette this morning to tell us more.

First off, you, I read, were fascinated by Western culture when you were growing up in the Soviet Union. How were you exposed so much to Western culture and why were you so taken with it?

VLADIMIR SAGAROV: My father used to travel nine months out of the year, and he would bring American records, American books to our family, and we kept it at home. So every time I would come home from school or from any place on the street, I would have a taste of American culture. I would have a taste of Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald at home, as opposed to, you know, this blabbering propaganda music on the loudspeakers on the street or whatever is transmitted on Moscow radio. And

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that was fresh air.

HARTMAN: Also clothes -- and also clothes and things like that.

SAGAROV: Yes, yes.

HARTMAN: Could you wear clothes, though, that were Western?

SAGAROV: Yes, I did. I did. Not to school, but regularly. So I became Americanized, so to say, very early.

HARTMAN: How did that influence, how did the Western influence influence your own opinion about the Soviet Union and about what your life was like there and how the Soviets do things, or did things?

SAGAROV: Western influence furthered my personal double standards while living in the Soviet Union. It influenced me in the sense that I had my own private culture, where I was looking out of that private culture toward the Soviet culture, and that was something strange to me.

HARTMAN: The Soviet culture.

SAGAROV: The Soviet culture. I never felt at home there.

HARTMAN: Even though you were born and brought up there.

SAGAROV: Even though I was born and brought up there.

HARTMAN: All right. You were schooled as a diplomat.

SAGAROV: Right.

HARTMAN: The Foreign Service, right? And then went in the KGB. Is that a normal -- is that a normal process?

SAGAROV: It's a normal process. Every Soviet diplomat, in one way or the other, works for the KGB. And there is no way to escape. You cannot say no in the Soviet Union, especially if you are a foreign affairs officer.

HARTMAN: And you're saying that almost all, if not all, foreign affairs-trained diplomats become KGB-involved in some way.

SAGAROV: They become involved with the KGB, all of them, a hundred percent of them. Yes.

HARTMAN: All right. You went to the Near East. You eventually made contact -- as a KGB agent, you made contact with the CIA. Who initiated that, you or the CIA? Or did you both?

SAGAROV: It happened very mysteriously to me. I was looking for a contact. Obviously, the agency was looking for a contact. And I was available and they were there. And I was very lucky.

HARTMAN: You were lucky.

SAGAROV: To have established that contact.

HARTMAN: What was -- what did you do for them and what did they do for you?

SAGAROV: We had an agreement that one day I will be able to come to the United States and...

HARTMAN: You made that agreement early.

SAGAROV: I made that agreement early. And they helped me later to come to the United States. Actually, I had to escape, but that's another story. And that was the basic agreement. And I will help them with whatever I can to provide information.

HARTMAN: And you supplied the United States with information.

SAGAROV: Yes. Uh-huh.

HARTMAN: Security information and what have you.

SAGAROV: Yes.

HARTMAN: Why did you defect?

SAGAROV: I did not belong in the Soviet Union, personally. I could not live with that system. I got overexposed to the elite life in the Soviet Union and I got overexposed to the peasant life in the Soviet Union.

HARTMAN: And there are two different societies.

SAGAROV: There are totally different societies. And it's quite disgusting that that situation exists. And that was my own way and the only way I knew how to be a dissenter, a dis -- whatever...

HARTMAN: A dissenter?

SAGAROV: That's right.

HARTMAN: Was to leave.

SAGAROV: To leave.

HARTMAN: Tell me about your escape. I've read it. But for our viewers this morning. In Kuwait, you escaped.

SAGAROV: I did escape.

HARTMAN: Tell us how you did it.

SAGAROV: I got a note from the agency that...

HARTMAN: The CIA.

SAGAROV: Yes. I had a problem, obviously. I was just about to be discovered by the Soviet security organs. And we had a pre-arranged system of escape. There was a backup system, but I used the first system which we had. I walked out into the desert. I walked about three miles. I picked up a...

HARTMAN: At night?

SAGAROV: At night, yeah. It was about 10 o'clock in the evening [unintelligible]. It was dark. I picked up one of the receivers. There were backup receivers. It's a directional antenna which was tuned to a station. I didn't know where the station was, but I was supposed to follow, sort of like a...

HARTMAN: You were told you had to listen to that frequency?

SAGAROV: Yes. And if I would deviate from the course, the frequency will disappear. So I walked a straight line. And there was supposed to be a car waiting for me with the keys in the ignition. And I was walking. I saw a helicopter flying. I got scared for the first time in my life then.

HARTMAN: Scared for the first time in your life?

SAGAROV: Yes. It was -- it was like unreal, really. I had that detached experience.

HARTMAN: Like the movies.

SAGAROV: Yes. That was not me walking there. I was looking from somewhere else at me.

HARTMAN: What was on the radio? What were you listening to?

SAGAROV: That was "The Girl from Ipanema." That was my Brazilian phase, of being fascinated with Brazilian jazz at the time. And my contact in the CIA knew about it. And that was -- I don't know. That was sort of a joke.

HARTMAN: So that was on the frequency?

SAGAROV: That's right.

HARTMAN: Over and over and over?

SAGAROV: Over and over again.

HARTMAN: "The Girl from Ipanema."

SAGAROV: That's right.

HARTMAN: Did you find your car eventually, or did you get out some other way?

SAGAROV: Well, there wasn't -- what happened is that there were some Arabs in my way, and I thought they were border patrol. And I was at a state when I was losing the frequency. I was a little bit tired, and it happened at the same time. I got rid of the receiver, and those Arabs were there, and I asked them where -- "Have you seen my car? I'm an American geologist," you know, oil explorer in the desert. They showed me the car. They said, "There is a car a little bit down the road." And I said, "It's mine."

HARTMAN: It seems like a contradiction, Mr. Sagarov, that you will appear in the darkness here because you don't want to be iden -- and yet the KGB must know who you are, where you are.

SAGAROV: I'm sure they do.

HARTMAN: You're sure they do. But they obviously don't want you, or they would have done something long before this.

SAGAROV: They would have eliminated me a long time ago.

HARTMAN: Then why write under the name of Sagarov and why appear in the darkness like this? What are you trying to protect?

SAGAROV: I have friends, I have family, I have business associates...

HARTMAN: Here in the United States.

SAGAROV: ...who know me under my different identity. And I don't want them to get hurt or get in any way harmed. And that's the reason.

HARTMAN: Mr. Sagarov, thanks for joining us today.

SAGAROV: Thank you very much.